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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the treatment process of individualized lesson plans for teaching discipline to children was effective in reducing time-off-task and disruptive behaviors, while increasing time-on-task and appropriate social behaviors. The study was conducted at a primary school in Knoxville, Tennessee. Each of six teachers selected their most serious problem student as subjects for the study. Three students from the Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance of The University of Tennessee were employed and trained as observers. A multiple baseline design was employed which provided for the introduction of the intervention strategy at different times for each subject. It was hypothesized that the individualized approach to teaching discipline would result in an increase in the students' appropriate behavior and decrease in their inappropriate behavior. The hypothesis was supported by the data collected. (Author)

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TEACHING DISCIPLINE TO STUDENTS:

AN INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING - COUNSELING APPROACH

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Running head: Teaching Discipline To Students:

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the treatment process of utilizing an individualized teaching-counseling approach for teaching discipline to children was effective in reducing time-off-task and disruptive behaviors, while increasing time-on-task and appropriate social behaviors. The study was conducted at a primary school in Knoxville, Tennessee. Each of six teachers selected their most serious problem child for the study. Three students from the Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance of The University of Tennessee were employed and trained as observers. A multiple baseline design was employed which provided for the introduction of the intervention strategy at different times for each child. It was hypothesized that the individualized approach to teaching discipline would result in an increase in the students' appropriate behavior and a decrease in their inappropriate behavior. The hypothesis was supported by the data collected.

TEACHING DISCIPLINE TO STUDENTS:

AN INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING AND COUNSELING APPROACH

Teaching discipline to students was the theme of an article by William Glasser which appeared in the December, 1974, issue of Learning. The idea of teaching discipline as a school subject is appealing because school discipline and classroom management problems continue to rank at the top of the teacher's headache list (Gallup, 1975). However, the volumes of literature published on the topic of school discipline have not succeeded in bridging the gap between theory and practice (see Hansen, 1974; Jones, 1973; DHEW, 1974; and Violence in Evanston, 1975). Therefore, the study reported herein was directed toward developing and testing an individualized teaching-counseling approach for teaching discipline to students. It was hypothesized that these individualized lesson plans for teaching discipline would result in an increase in the number of socially appropriate and task relevant behaviors and a corresponding decrease in disruptive and off-task behaviors exhibited by each student participating in the study.

For purposes of the study, disciplined behavior was defined as behavior which is helpful to oneself or to others. More specifically, appropriate behavior included: working on assignments, paying attention to the teacher or to other students contributing to the lesson, asking questions about the lesson, and any other behavior consistent with the ongoing lesson. Appropriate behavior also included socially acceptable interactions among the students during free time sessions between scheduled lessons. Such behaviors as talking, laughing, or individual activity were defined as appropriate if

they did not interfere with the classroom learning process.

Inappropriate behavior was defined as all disruptive and time-off-task behavior. These behaviors included interrupting another student's or their own learning by: leaving one's seat, making distracting noises, talking, hitting, pushing, and grabbing objects from another child.

Method

The study was conducted at a primary school in the Knox County School System in Tennessee. The enrollment was approximately one thousand students in grades one through four. The physical plant is an open-spaced facility that serves middle and upper-middle class residential neighborhoods, with a small number of students coming from low income families and minority ethnic groups.

The concepts involved in the treatment phase were presented to the entire school staff during an in-service meeting. After the presentation, the six teachers who volunteered to participate were asked to select the one student who posed the most numerous, serious, and difficult problems in the classroom. All six of the students selected were males: one second grader, two third graders, and three fourth graders.

The six teachers met with the experimenters immediately after the general staff meeting to discuss the study in more detail. Each teacher received a training notebook which included the ten-step process to be used during the treatment phase (see Figure 1), a description of the behavioral categories to be used by the observers, an example of the daily observation record sheet, and some paper on which to keep anecdotal records of the target student's and her own behavior during the study.

One experimenter was available in the school everyday for about two hours to observe and to consult with the teachers. From 2:20 - 3:30 P.M. the teachers' time was reserved for individual and team planning, parent conferences, consultation, and staff meetings. The conference period provided an excellent opportunity to talk individually with the teachers concerning the study.

Three female students were employed as observers by the experimenter from the Educational Psychology and Guidance Department of The University of Tennessee. Each of the observers was allowed to earn points toward her grade contract in addition to remuneration of approximately one dollar per hour. Two of the observers were assigned three children each to observe throughout the entire study. The third observer was scheduled to make a reliability check with each of the other observers each week and was also to be available to observe a child when needed.

The experimenters produced a two-hour video tape of actual classroom activity which was used as a training tape for the observers. Two, two-hour training sessions were conducted by the experimenter to train the observers. At the conclusion of the second training session the reliability ratings achieved by the observers ranged from 85 to 95 percent. The two primary observers were given schedules which required a 30 minute observation period on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for each child.

An on-the-count time interval assessment observation system was employed (Williams and Anandam, 1973). This procedure entails: (1) looking at your watch, (2) looking at the target student to determine which of the four classifications of behavior he was emitting at that moment, (3) looking down at the

record sheet and recording the observed behavior, and (4) rechecking the watch to determine when the next ten second period begins. The four classifications of behavior used by the observers were task relevant, appropriate social interaction, time-off-task, and disruptive behavior.

The reliability ratings were taken by having two observers rate the same child, independently, for a 30 minute time period. A touch signal was used at the beginning of each ten second period to assure that the observers were both observing and recording simultaneously. Inter-rater agreement was assessed by dividing the total number of observations into the number of agreements. The inter-rater reliability ratings, were taken on a weekly basis, ranged from 91-96 percent during the study.

Phase I: Baseline Conditions

The teachers were instructed to continue their normal classroom procedures, interactions, and responses during Phase I, the baseline observation period.

Phase II: Treatment Conditions

Each teacher was asked to compile four lists:

1. Everything which I have already tried with my target student that does not help.
2. Things which I can do to help my target student have a better day (after treatment begins).
3. Topics I can talk about with my target student.
4. Things I can use as reinforcers when I "catch" my target student doing appropriate behaviors.

One experimenter met individually with each teacher to review these lists and enlarge upon them where necessary prior to the onset of treatment. During the first three days of treatment the teachers were requested to restrict themselves to steps one, two, and three of the ten-step treatment process. The purpose of this restriction was to encourage the teachers to focus on improving the teacher-student relationship before focusing on the target student's specific behavior problems. The ten-step process is presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The following is a description of some ways in which the ten-step treatment process was individualized for each student:

1. The lists which the teachers compiled individually were tailored to the unique needs and interests of each subject.
2. Step six involved individual conferences between the teacher and her target student during which any reasonable plan could be developed. These plans varied from student to student.
3. Each teacher employed the levels of treatment she thought were needed for her particular student. Teachers were requested to use steps beyond three only as needed and to drop back toward step one as soon as possible.

Throughout the treatment phase of this study the experimenter consistently reinforced the teachers for appropriately utilizing this process and also encouraged each teacher to individualize the process to meet the needs of her target student as well as her own needs. In an attempt to ascertain any problems of implementing this procedure, the experimenter requested the teachers to predict possible difficulties. It was discovered that several thought it would be very difficult to construct a time-out area in their suites. Consequently, the experimenters arranged to have several appliance cartons delivered to the school which were donated by a local department store. These were decorated and equipped with a desk, making very adequate quiet corners or study carrels.

A multiple baseline design was used in which the baseline period began on the same day for all subjects, but varied in length from six to fifteen school days. Consequently, the twenty-day treatment periods were not administered simultaneously to individual subjects. The multiple baseline design allows changes in the dependent variable (student behavior) to be attributed to the treatment conditions rather than other variables which might be operating during any one given time period.

Graphs and tables were used to present the data obtained in the study. The absolute frequency of appropriate and inappropriate behavior for each subject was graphed. The mean percentage occurrence of appropriate and inappropriate behavior for each subject, by phases, was calculated and presented in tabular form. The percentage difference of appropriate and

inappropriate behavior between baseline and treatment conditions was calculated for each subject by the following formula: $\frac{\text{Phase II - Phase I}}{\text{Phase I}} \times 100$.

Results

In the presentation of findings, teachers are designated as Teacher A, B, C, D, E, and F, and each teacher's target student is designated as S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4, S_5, and S_6, respectively. Records of the absolute frequency of behavior, as recorded by the observers on daily behavior record sheets, are presented graphically for each student in Figures 2 through 7. Time-on-task and appropriate social behavior were classified as appropriate behavior (+). Time-off-task and disruptive behavior were classified as inapproprite behavior (-). An on-the-count time interval observation procedure was employed which consisted of a 30 minute period of ten-second intervals. This system made it possible for the absolute frequency of behavior to range from 0 to 180. Inter-observer reliability was checked on a weekly basis during the study. Reliability was calculated by dividing the total number of observations into the number of agreements. Inter-observer reliability during Phase I ranged from 95 to 96 percent, with a mean of 95.66 percent. During Phase II the reliability ranged from 92 to 97 percent, with a mean of 94.66 percent.

Figure 2 is a graph showing the results for student #1. For S_1 there was a 15 day observation period followed by a 20 day treatment period. During baseline the absolute frequency of inappropriate behavior was erractic and ranged from 38 to 161 with a mean of 91. During treatment, misbehavior was reduced and remained low with a range of 1 to 33 and a mean of 11.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 presents the results for student #2. S_2 had an 11 day baseline period. Teacher B was absent for two days; consequently, the treatment period lasted 22 days. During baseline the absolute frequency of misbehavior for S_2 ranged from 39 to 100 with a mean of 62. During treatment the range of misbehavior was 1 to 54 with a mean of 2[illegible].

Insert Figure 3 about here

Figure 4 presents the results for student #3. The baseline period was 11 days and the treatment period was 22 days for S_3 Teacher C requested the additional two days to see if stabilization of the improved behavior could be achieved. The mean of the absolute frequency of misbehavior during baseline was 103 with a range of 34 to 107. During treatment the frequency of misbehavior ranged from 0 to 79 with a mean of 35. The behavior of S_3 was extremely erratic during Phase I and the first nine days of Phase II. During the last 13 days of treatment, however, his behavior improved consistently.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Figure 5 presents the results for student #4. The ten-day baseline period was followed by a 16 day treatment period for S_4. The treatment period was cut short because the student's home situation necessitated placement in a resident school for children needing psychiatric help or controlled environments. Therefore it was impossible to complete the twenty

day treatment period. During Phase I the absolute frequency of inappropriate behavior for S_4 ranged from 20 to 76 with a mean of 55. During Phase II the range for the same behavior was 1 to 47 with a mean of 16.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Figure 6 presents the results for student #5. There was a six-day baseline period and a 25 day treatment period for S_5 which was due to teacher and subject absences. The abolute frequency of inappropriate behavior during baseline ranged from 29 to 100 with a mean of 60. During treatment the inappropriate behavior ranged from 1 to 95 with a mean of 29. With one exception, the fourth day of treatment, improvement of behavior was very consistent.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Figure 7 presents the results for student #6. Treatment began on the fourteenth day of the study for S_6. During baseline the absolute frequency of inappropriate behavior ranged from 40 to 174 with a mean of 107. During treatment inappropriate behavior ranged from 0 to 41 with a mean of 20. This was the most dramatic improvement of behavior achieved during the study.

Insert Figure 7 about here

In addition to the presentation of the absolute frequency of behavior of subjects, the data from the daily behavior record sheets has been presented in terms of the mean percentage occurrence of appropriate (+) and inappropriate (-) behavior by phases, for each subject, as shown in Table 1. The average percentage of appropriate behavior increased for every subject. The smallest increase was an 18 percent increase by S_5. However, S_5 exhibited 66 percent appropriate behavior during baseline. The largest mean percentage increase in appropriate behavior was experienced by S_6. He increased 49 percentage points.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 presents the data in terms of percentage difference of appropriate and inappropriate behavior between baseline and treatment conditions for each subject. The mean percentage scores were used for the calculations. The formula employed was $\frac{\text{Phase II - Phase I}}{\text{Phase I}} \times 100$. Percentage differences scores between phases for individual subjects ranged from +27 to +122 for appropriate behavior and from -82 down to -53 for inappropriate behavior. The difference scores for all subjects was in the same direction.

Insert Table 2 about here

Steps one, two, and three were employed exclusively by each teacher during the first three days of Phase II. The purpose of these steps was to increase involvement between the student and the teacher. All six subjects exhibited an increase in appropriate behavior during this three-day involvement phase.

It seems appropriate to report a number of unobtrusive measures of student behavior which were observed during the study. Behavior patterns which were altered during the treatment phase but were not part of the original design were attendance, expressing warmth toward the teacher, and modeling the behavior of teachers and peers.

Although attendance has not been a significant problem among the target students, the attendance records of two subjects improved. S_2 was absent four days and S_6 was absent two days during the 20 day period prior to the study. During treatment absences were reduced to one day and no days, respectively, for S_2 and S_6.

New behaviors reported by the teachers of three target students may be classified as expressions of warmth or affection. S_3 presented Teacher C with a letter of appreciation on two occasions. S_5 brought Teacher E flowers on several days, as well as giving her a thank you letter. S_6 gave Teacher F a picture for her desk and a short note thanking her for being his friend. These behaviors occurred for the first time for these students during the treatment period.

Apparently modeling effects were in operation during Phase II. Target students were observed modeling teacher and peer behaviors, which were new behaviors for the subjects. These behaviors were reported by the teachers in anecdotal records as well as verbally to the experimenter. S_1 and S_6 each chose to go to the library to read when given a choice of earned, free-time activities. Students had been allowed to go to the library when all assignments were completed. These two subjects told their teachers that since they had never before completed all their work they never had a chance to go to the library on their own like the other children did.

S_1, S_2, and S_5 were observed on several occasions using polite phrases, such as please, thank you, and excuse me. Each of their teachers reported this to be extremely atypical for the subjects prior to treatment.

S_6 was observed verbally reinforcing his classmates for working on assignments. He had previously disrupted, rather than encouraged students who were on task.

The teachers reported that all students were doing better in their schoolwork. The increased amount of time the students spent on task relevant behaviors evidently was reflected in an improvement in the quality of the students' academic performance.

Summary and Discussion

The results from the study support our prediction that an individualized teaching-counseling approach for teaching the subject of discipline to children would be effective. Each student made considerable gains on the target behaviors as well as on several unobtrusive measures. While the present study is only a small beginning, it does represent a carefully controlled attempt to examine the utility of teaching discipline to students who lack knowledge of this important subject. As Glasser (1974) pointed out, discipline must be learned and once learned it will probably become part of the person's life style. There may be no learning more valuable than discipline as students begin to find their place in this world. Perhaps the most significant finding of the study is documentation of the often-heard phase that humanizing approaches to classroom management are effective in teaching discipline because children begin to feel worthwhile and loved. Feeling loved and worthwhile are needs we all seek to fill--if not through appropriate means then through all those inappropriate behaviors of the types mentioned earlier.

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Figure 1

Teaching Discipline: An Individualized Approach[1]

The Involvement Phase

1. Make a list of what you have tried that has not helped your student and stop these unhelpful behaviors.

2. Treat your student's misbehavior as a first offense. Forget past misconduct and reinforce helpful behaviors.

3. Think of at least one thing you can do to help your student have a better day.

The Counseling Phase

4. Quietly request your student to correct his/her behavior (non-verbally, if possible).

5. Counsel your student utilizing Glasser's (1974) Reality Therapy approach.

6. Develop written contracts with your student which outline the student's plan for changing his/her behavior.

The Time-out Phase

7. Use classroom time-out procedures such as seat II and the quiet corner (Thompson & Poppen, 1972) followed by the student's written plan for correcting the misbehavior.

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[1]The ten-step approach to teaching discipline was developed from Glasser (1974) and Thompson & Poppen (1972).

8. Use out of class time-out procedures such as a time-out room or the principal's office followed again with the student's written plan for doing more helpful behaviors in the classroom.

9. Use a home-based, time-out procedure when the school time-out procedures fail. All time-out procedures are based on logical consequences to behavior rather than the use of illogical punishment techniques (See systematic isolation in Thompson & Poppen, 1972).

10. Enlist the aid of community resources such as alternative schools, juvenile court workers, and/or other counseling services.

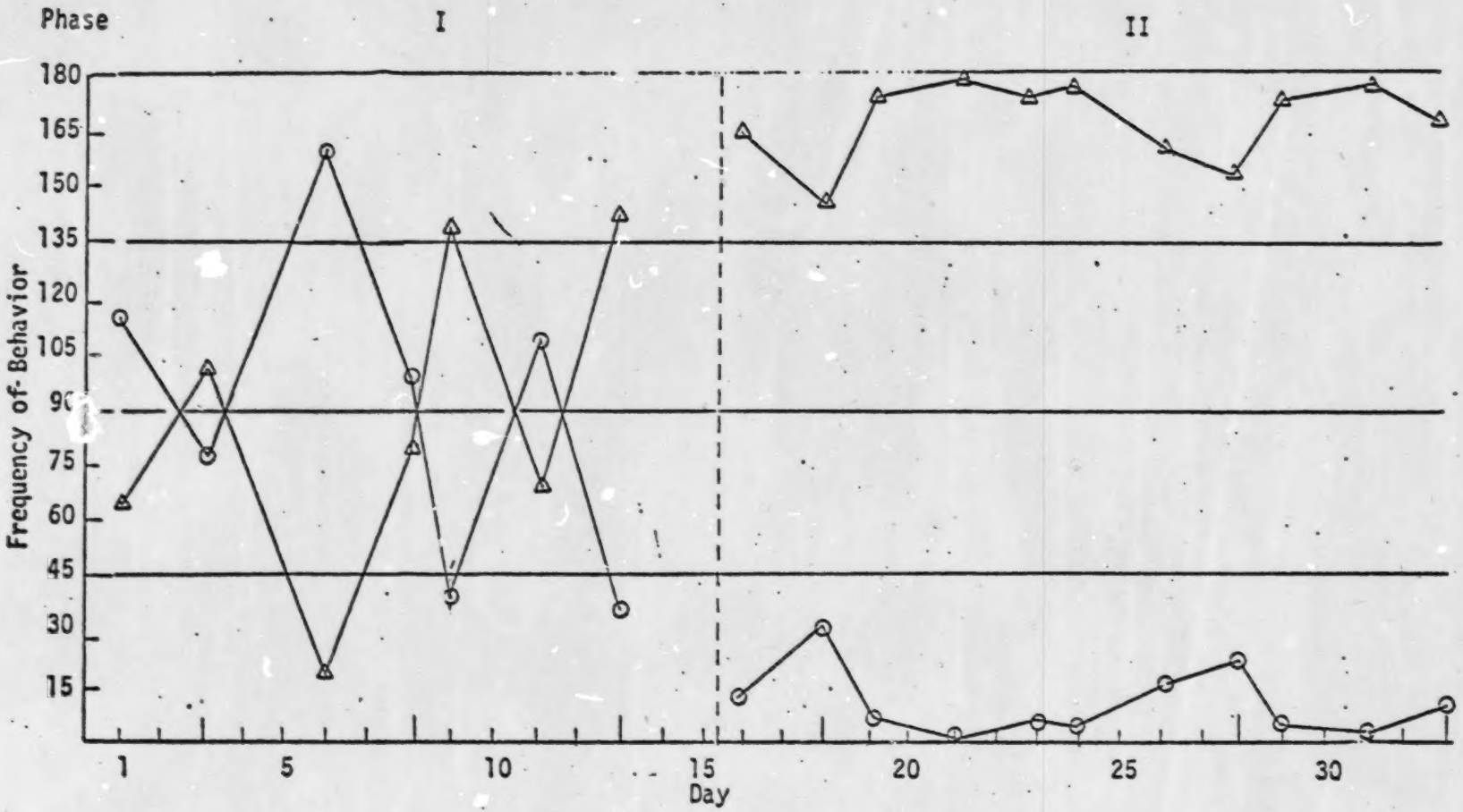

Figure 2. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_1.

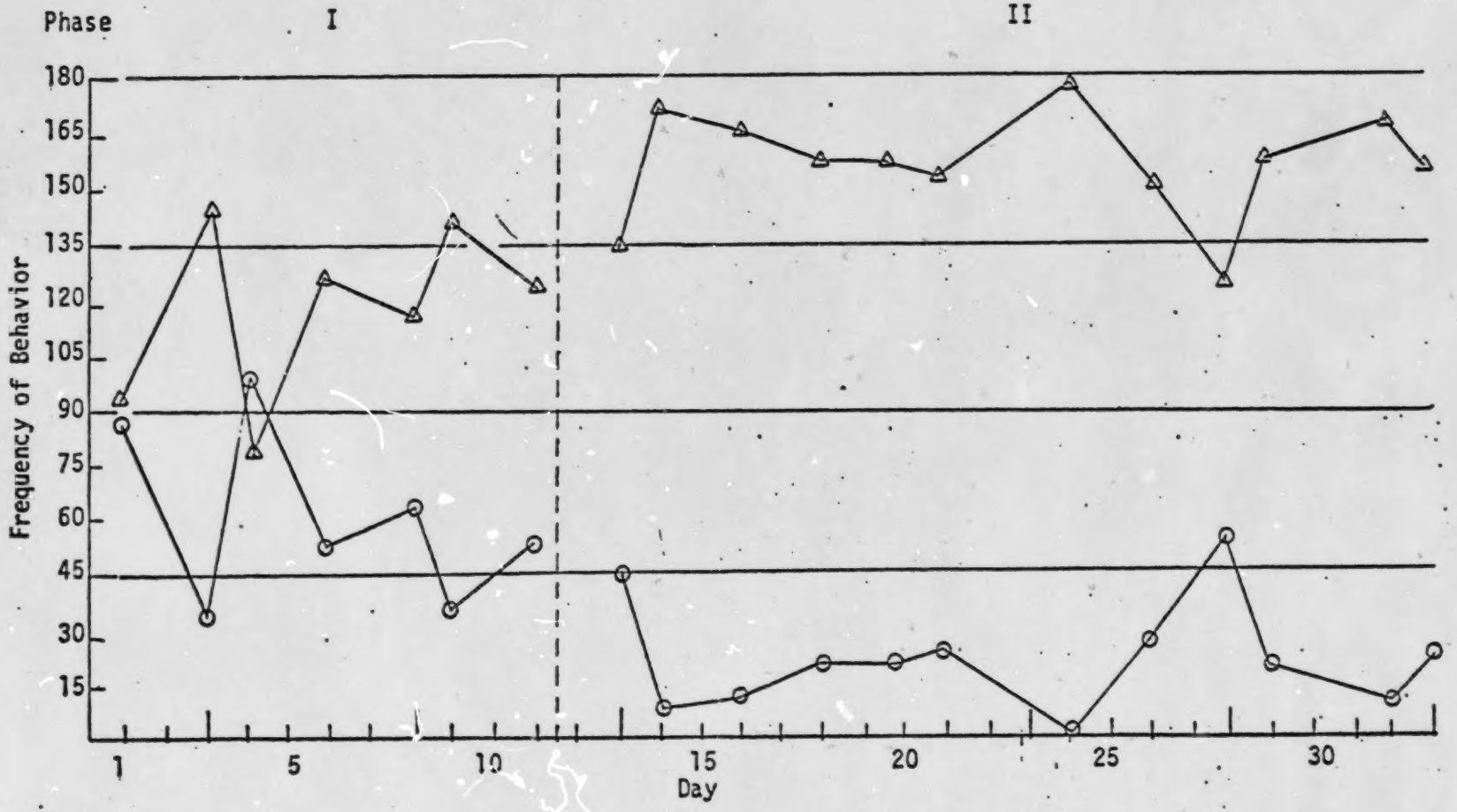

Figure 3. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_2.

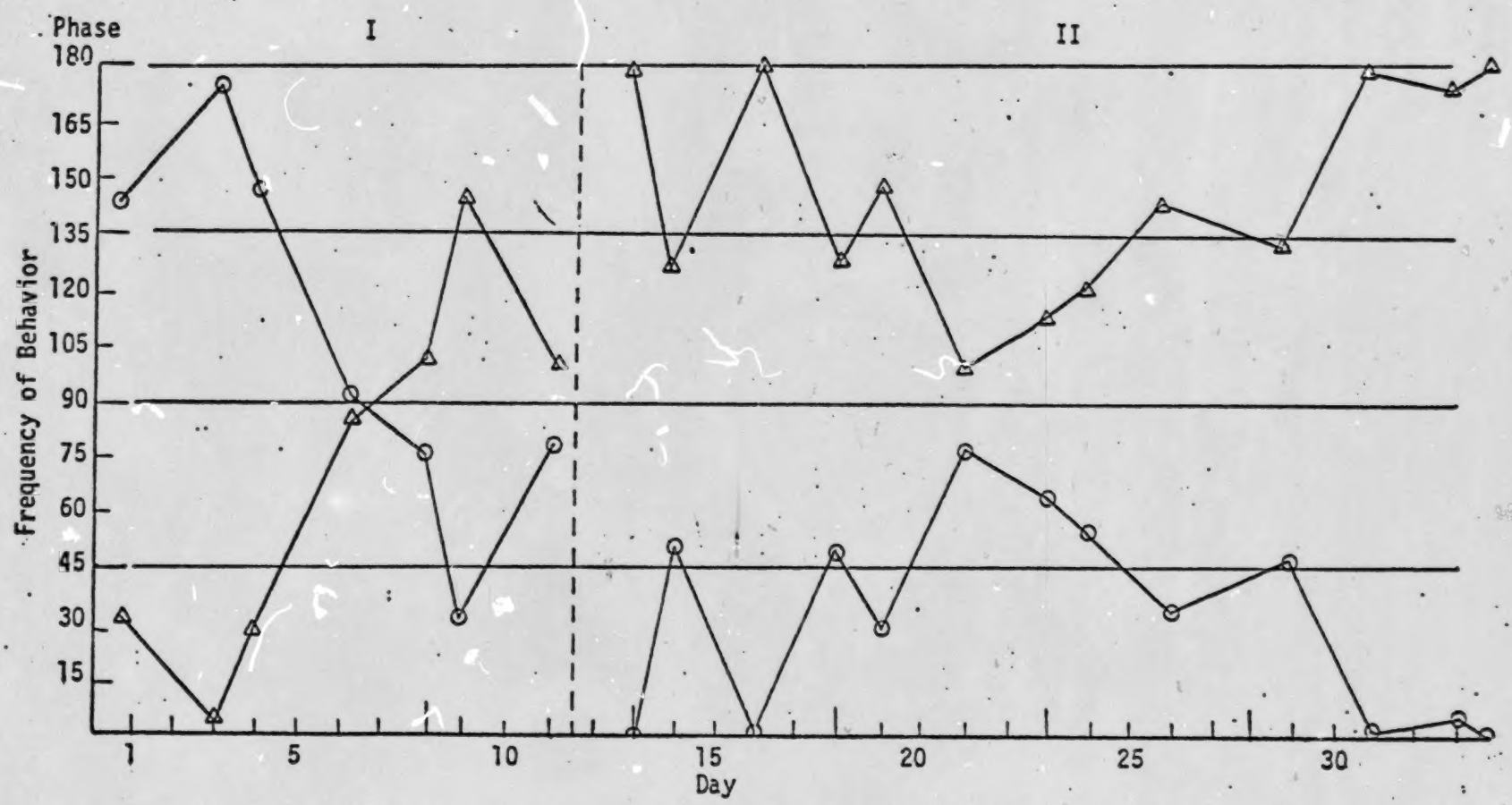

Figure 4. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_3.

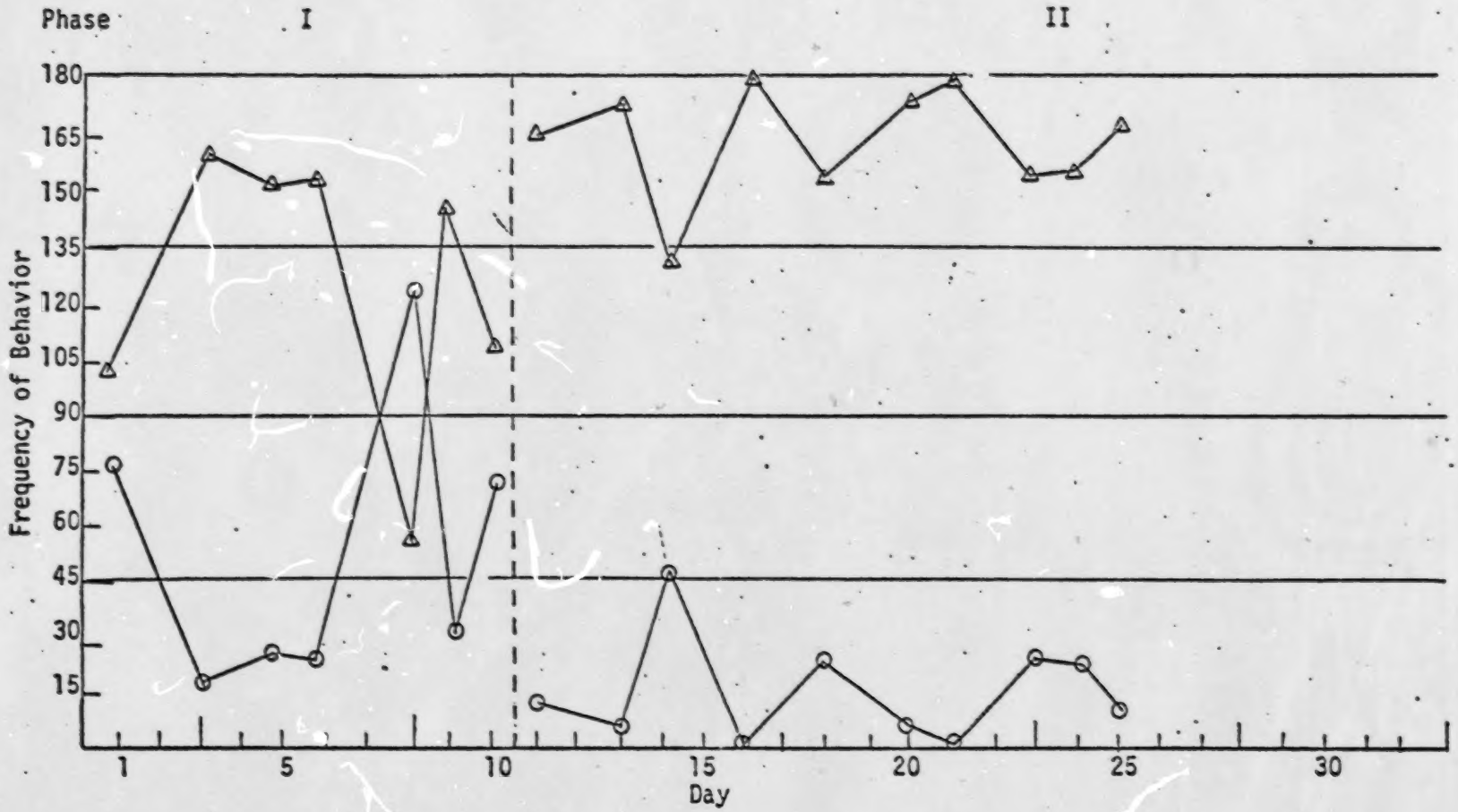

Figure 5. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_4.

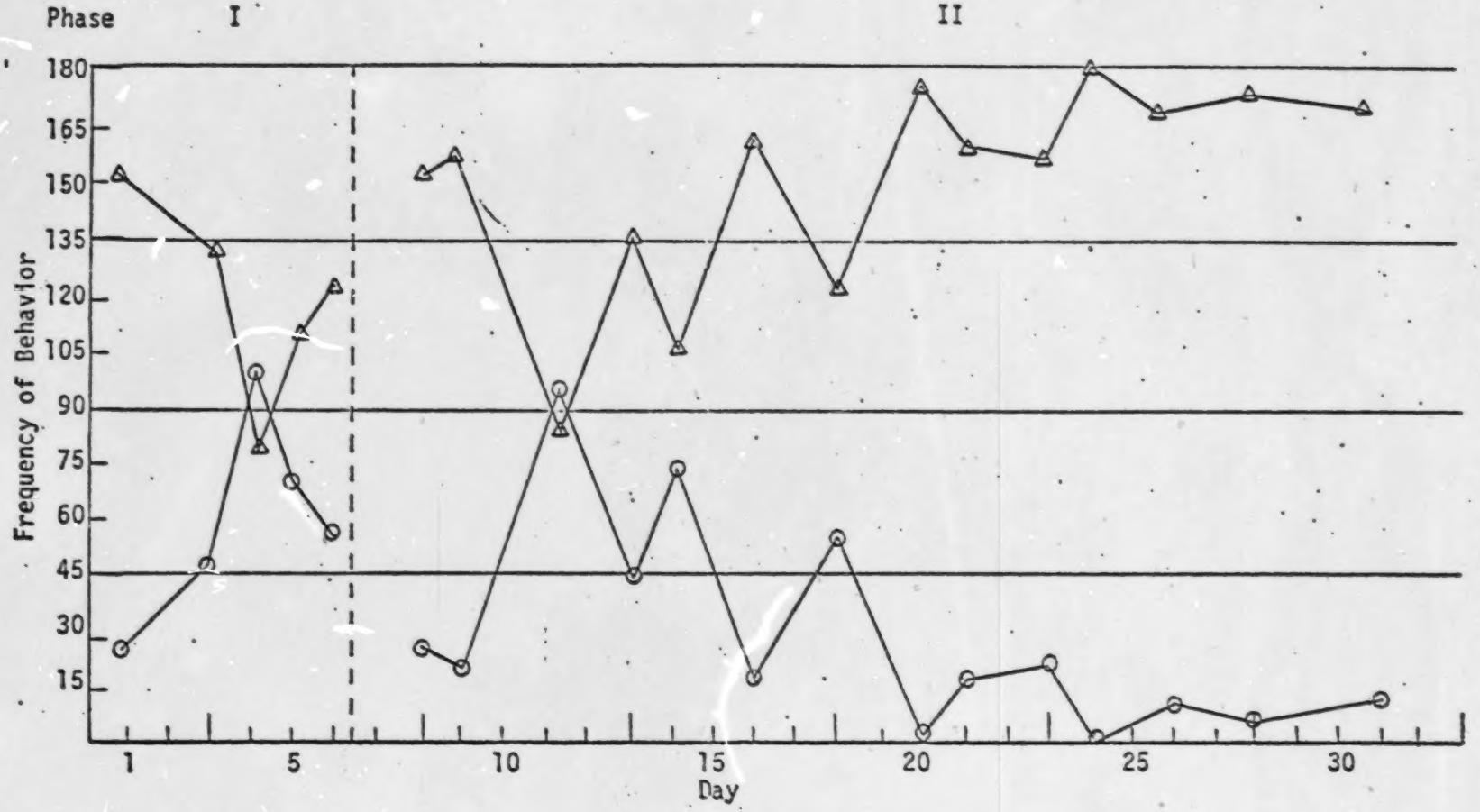

Figure 6. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_5.

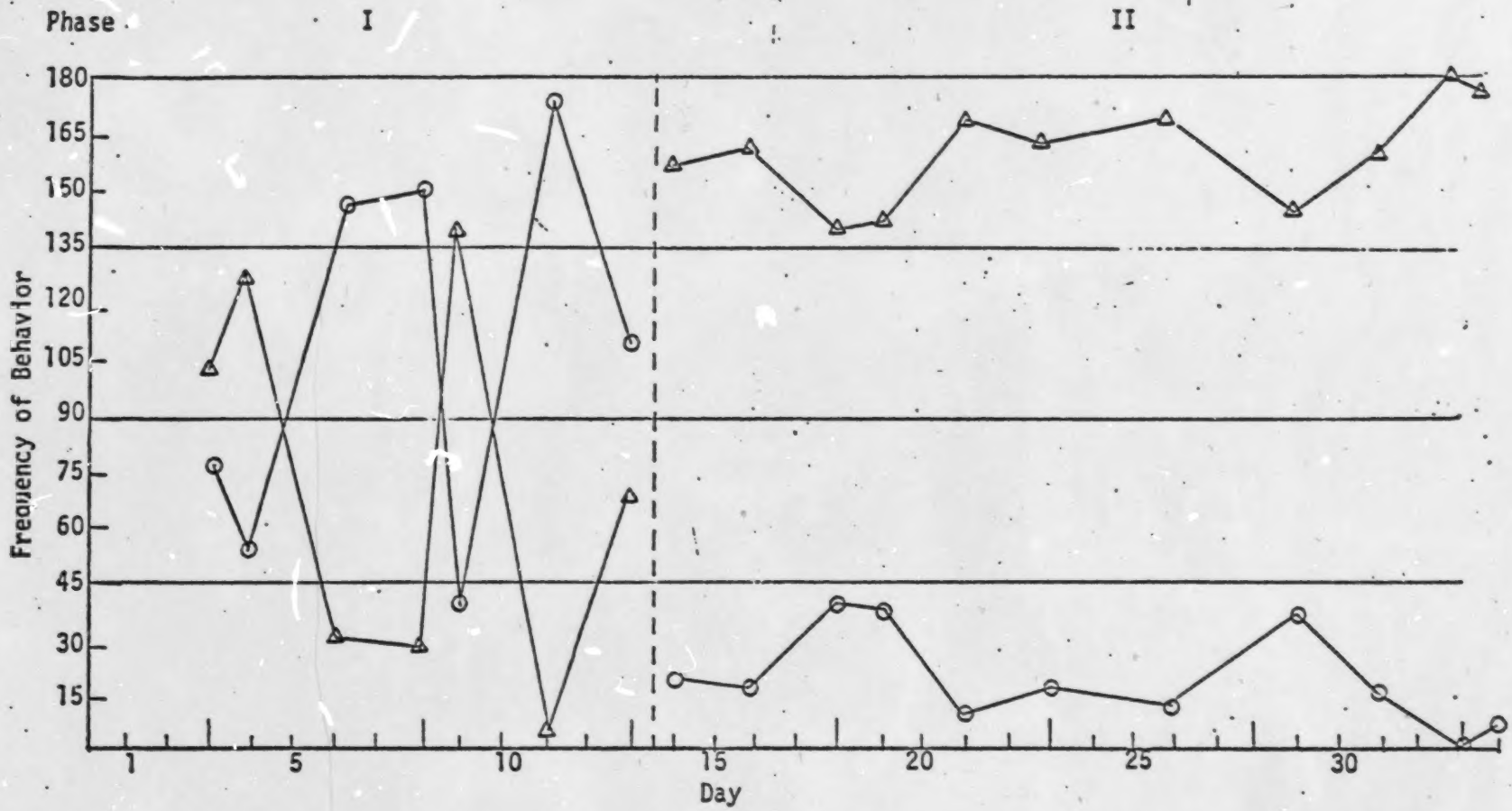

Figure 7. Absolute frequency of appropriate (Δ) and inappropriate (o) behavior for S_6.

Table 1

MEAN PERCENTAGE OCCURRENCE OF

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR BY PHASES

Target Student (Behavior)	Behavior Occurrence (%) Phase		
	Baseline	Phase II Days 1-3	Phase II
Appropriate			
S_1	49	87	94
S_2	66	85	87
S_3	41	86	80
S_4	69	94	91
S_5	67	86	84
S_6	41	88	89
Inappropriate			
S_1	51	13	6
S_2	34	15	13
S_3	59	14	20
S_4	31	6	9
S_5	33	14	16
S_6	59	12	11

Table 2

PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE OF APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR BETWEEN BASELINE AND TREATMENT CONDITIONS

Behavior	Mean Percentage Difference for Students					
	S_1	S_2	S_3	S_4	S_5	S_6
Appropriate	+92	+31	+100	+30	+27	+122
Inappropriate	-82	-62	-67	-70	-53	-82